

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

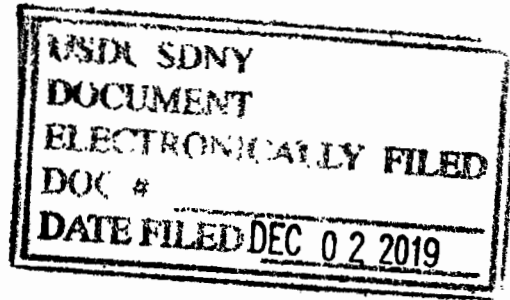
DAVID S. OWENS,

Plaintiff,

-against-

POLICE DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK CITY;
JOHN DOE POLICE OFFICER,

Defendants.



19-CV-10213 (GBD)

ORDER OF SERVICE

GEORGE B. DANIELS, United States District Judge:

Plaintiff, currently incarcerated in Auburn Correctional Facility, brings this *pro se* action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, alleging that Defendants violated his constitutional rights. By order dated November 26, 2019, the Court granted Plaintiff's request to proceed without prepayment of fees, that is, *in forma pauperis* (IFP).¹

STANDARD OF REVIEW

The Prison Litigation Reform Act requires that federal courts screen complaints brought by prisoners who seek relief against a governmental entity or an officer or employee of a governmental entity. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a). The Court must dismiss a prisoner's IFP complaint, or any portion of the complaint, that is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B), 1915A(b); *see Abbas v. Dixon*, 480 F.3d 636, 639 (2d Cir. 2007). The Court must also dismiss a complaint if the court lacks subject matter jurisdiction. *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3).

¹ Prisoners are not exempt from paying the full filing fee even when they have been granted permission to proceed IFP. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1).

While the law mandates dismissal on any of these grounds, the Court is obliged to construe *pro se* pleadings liberally, *Harris v. Mills*, 572 F.3d 66, 72 (2d Cir. 2009), and interpret them to raise the “strongest [claims] that they suggest,” *Triestman v. Fed. Bureau of Prisons*, 470 F.3d 471, 474 (2d Cir. 2006) (internal quotation marks and citations omitted) (emphasis in original). But the “special solicitude” in *pro se* cases, *id.* at 475 (citation omitted), has its limits – to state a claim, *pro se* pleadings still must comply with Rule 8 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, which requires a complaint to make a short and plain statement showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.

The Supreme Court has held that under Rule 8, a complaint must include enough facts to state a claim for relief “that is plausible on its face.” *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007). A claim is facially plausible if the plaintiff pleads enough factual detail to allow the Court to draw the inference that the defendant is liable for the alleged misconduct. In reviewing the complaint, the Court must accept all well-pleaded factual allegations as true. *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678-79 (2009). But it does not have to accept as true “[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action,” which are essentially just legal conclusions. *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555. After separating legal conclusions from well-pleaded factual allegations, the court must determine whether those facts make it plausible – not merely possible – that the pleader is entitled to relief. *Id.*

DISCUSSION

A. Police Department of New York City

Plaintiff’s claims against the Police Department of New York City must be dismissed because an agency of the City of New York is not an entity that can be sued. N.Y. City Charter ch. 17, § 396 (“[A]ll actions and proceedings for the recovery of penalties for the violation of any law shall be brought in the name of the city of New York and not in that of any agency,

except where otherwise provided by law.”); *Jenkins v. City of New York*, 478 F.3d 76, 93 n.19 (2d Cir. 2007); *see also Emerson v. City of New York*, 740 F. Supp. 2d 385, 396 (S.D.N.Y. 2010) (“[A] plaintiff is generally prohibited from suing a municipal agency.”).

In light of Plaintiff’s *pro se* status and clear intention to assert claims against the City of New York, the Court construes the complaint as asserting claims against the City of New York and directs the Clerk of Court to amend the caption of this action to replace the Police Department of New York City with the City of New York. *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 21. This amendment is without prejudice to any defenses the City of New York may wish to assert.

B. Service on the City of New York

Because Plaintiff has been granted permission to proceed IFP, Plaintiff is entitled to rely on the Court and the U.S. Marshals Service to effect service. *Walker v. Schult*, 717 F.3d 119, 123 n.6 (2d Cir. 2013); *see also* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(d) (“The officers of the court shall issue and serve all process . . . in [IFP] cases.”); Fed. R. Civ. P. 4(c)(3) (the court must order the Marshals Service to serve if the plaintiff is authorized to proceed IFP)). Although Rule 4(m) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure generally requires that the summons and complaint be served within 90 days of the date the complaint is filed, Plaintiff is proceeding IFP and could not have served the summons and complaint until the Court reviewed the complaint and ordered that a summons be issued. The Court therefore extends the time to serve until 90 days after the date the summons is issued. If the complaint is not served within that time, Plaintiff should request an extension of time for service. *See Meilleur v. Strong*, 682 F.3d 56, 63 (2d Cir. 2012) (holding that it is the plaintiff’s responsibility to request an extension of time for service); *see also Murray v. Pataki*, 378 F. App’x 50, 52 (2d Cir. 2010) (“As long as the [plaintiff proceeding IFP] provides the information necessary to identify the defendant, the Marshals’ failure to effect service

automatically constitutes ‘good cause’ for an extension of time within the meaning of Rule 4(m).”).

To allow Plaintiff to effect service on Defendant the City of New York through the U.S. Marshals Service, the Clerk of Court is instructed to fill out a U.S. Marshals Service Process Receipt and Return form (“USM-285 form”) for this Defendant. The Clerk of Court is further instructed to issue a summons and deliver to the Marshals Service all the paperwork necessary for the Marshals Service to effect service upon this Defendant.

Plaintiff must notify the Court in writing if Plaintiff’s address changes, and the Court may dismiss the action if Plaintiff fails to do so.

C. John Doe Police Officer

Under *Valentin v. Dinkins*, a *pro se* litigant is entitled to assistance from the district court in identifying a defendant. 121 F.3d 72, 76 (2d Cir. 1997). In the complaint, Plaintiff supplies sufficient information to permit the New York City Police Department to identify the police officer who arrested Plaintiff on November 2, 2016. It is therefore ordered that the New York City Law Department, which is the attorney for and agent of the New York City Police Department, must ascertain the identity and badge number of the John Doe police officer whom Plaintiff seeks to sue here and the address where the Defendant may be served. The New York City Law Department must provide this information to Plaintiff and the Court within sixty days of the date of this order.

Within thirty days of receiving this information, Plaintiff must file an amended complaint naming the John Doe defendant. The amended complaint will replace, not supplement, the original complaint. An amended complaint form that Plaintiff should complete is attached to this order. Once Plaintiff has filed an amended complaint, the Court will screen the amended complaint and, if necessary, issue an order directing the Clerk of Court to complete the USM-285

forms with the address for the named John Doe Defendant and deliver to the U.S. Marshals Service. all documents necessary to effect service.

CONCLUSION

The Clerk of Court is directed to mail a copy of this order to Plaintiff, together with an information package.

The Court dismisses Plaintiff's claims against the Police Department of New York City. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii). The Clerk of Court is directed to add the City of New York as a Defendant under Fed. R. Civ. P. 21.

The Clerk of Court is further instructed to issue a summons, complete the USM-285 form with the address for the City of New York, and deliver to the U.S. Marshals Service all documents necessary to effect service.

The Clerk of Court is directed to mail a copy of this order and the complaint to New York City Law Department at: 100 Church Street, New York, New York 10007.

The Court certifies under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3) that any appeal from this order would not be taken in good faith, and therefore IFP status is denied for the purpose of an appeal. *Cf. Coppedge v. United States*, 369 U.S. 438, 444-45 (1962) (holding that an appellant demonstrates good faith when he seeks review of a nonfrivolous issue).

SO ORDERED.

Dated: **DEC 02 2019**
New York, New York



GEORGE B. DANIELS
United States District Judge

DEFENDANT AND SERVICE ADDRESS

City of New York
100 Church Street
New York, New York 10007